

105275 - Scholarly Communications and Access to Knowledge Workshop – 10-11 June 2009

Introductory Statement

Please note that this is only a snapshot of website content. Please visit the website at:

URL: <http://www.sca2kafrica.org/about/>

One of the key drivers of this project has been an understanding which has evolved over the last two years, that donors need to work together across projects. This has resulted in the projects – termed the [Foundational Projects](#) – that we've been doing over the past two years have meshed with one another: the outcomes of one project have fed into another; the perceptions of a project will influence the implementation process of another.

This is an informal relationship which is more a network of understanding and the sharing of findings.

The goal of this workshop is help formulate a project plan for the proposed Scholarly Communication and Access to Knowledge in Africa Project. The plan will cover multiple perspectives on scholarly publishing in Africa, and to devise a way forward.

The formal statement of the workshop is thus to:

develop an action research proposal directed at studying the ways and means for organisations and institutions to work in new ways to further scholarly communication and the generating and sharing of research.

Value Systems and Metrics



<http://www.sca2kafrica.org/about/value-systems-and-metrics/>

The promotion and reward policies of the universities have a major influence on what researchers publish, and where they seek to publish. The combination of the higher weighting given to publishing in peer-reviewed international journals appearing in the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) indexes, the prestige associated with publishing in these journals and at times the payment of a subsidy to universities for staff publishing in these ‘accredited’ journals govern the publishing behaviour of researchers.

Research has found that the system of recognition and reward at institutional and individual levels is deeply entrenched. This causes dissemination of knowledge to be restricted to a narrow band of publications that are often not accessible to African scholars.

The development of alternative and complementary metrics that can begin to influence the activities rewarded by institutions and the reward systems relevant to individual scholars in universities could potentially influence the knowledge production and publishing behaviour and practices of institutions and scholars.

An analysis of the existing reward and recognition system, as well as investigation into the feasibility and modalities of developing a complementary system of reward and recognition should be undertaken. The following issues should be investigated:

- How the value is quantified in terms of prestige, recognition and reward in the current scholarly communication system;
- What impact the current system has on the production and publication of African research;
- The readiness of the African university community for the introduction of alternative performance metrics; and
- What modalities and issues should be considered in the development and implementation of such metrics.

Economic Aspects



URL: <http://www.sca2kafrica.org/about/economic-aspects/>

Studies indicate that Africa has lost 11% of its share in global science since 1978. In Sub-Saharan Africa this figure stands at 31%. The most-cited reason for this is that the creation and dissemination of the latest research and scientific information plays an important role in the further production of knowledge and scientific output. In the African context, this is exacerbated by the lack of financial resources allocated to the publication of research and scientific exploration.

Thus it is important to look at alternative business models, especially those which employ information and communication technologies (ICTs), as these could offer practical, cost-effective opportunities for improving the publishing and dissemination processes. However, the cost profile of traditional and emerging scholarly communication models is uncertain, making it difficult for sound decisions to be made about how best scholarly communication activities should be supported. It becomes necessary to identify and quantify the costs involved in the scholarly communication value chain and also to identify the benefits gained from increased access to scholarly output.

The economic aspects of traditional and emerging scholarly communication models include the following:

- The **costs**, and how to quantify such costs, associated with the steps along the scholarly communication value chain;
- The **benefits**, and how to identify such benefits;
- The **conceptual frameworks, methodologies and tools** used to identify the costs and benefits;
- The **value of the investments** by universities and how these are funded;
- The **implications for such university investments**, given the costs and benefits that have been identified; and
- The **critical success factors** related to building sustainability.

Policy and Technology Frameworks



URL: <http://www.sca2kafrica.org/about/policy-and-technology-frameworks/>

The process of research, knowledge production and dissemination are embedded in specific university policy, organisational and technological infrastructures and culture. [Research](#) has shown that the implementation of open access scholarly communication requires supportive policy environments, the availability of technical and institutional capacities, of which the latter appears to be the most challenging. Institutional capacities include human resources and skills, management capability and the capacity to work in teams and partnerships.

In both the developing and developed worlds there are emerging policy and institutional development practices and experiences which support and enable scholarly communication. Within the African context these should be interrogated more extensively as follows:

- What would the most effective ICT infrastructure for comprehensive research dissemination look like?
- What best-practice models are currently in place in universities?
- What international examples of best practice in this regard could inform this research, and how could it be adapted for the African context?
- How would communication systems need to link into administrative systems in universities, in order to ensure the most effective leverage for research output?
- How could these communication systems be linked into the platforms that are used for both individual publications and departmental repositories?
- Where is the most appropriate home for publishing-focused ICT infrastructure and management within universities?
- What policy change is needed to deliver a wider mandate for research publications?

Developing Capacity



URL: <http://www.sca2kafrica.org/about/developing-capacity/>

Making research output accessible in an electronic networked environment requires technical capacities that may not be readily available within the university. Included in this would be hardware, software and networking technology requirements for building digital repositories or publishing electronic journals. Expertise in organising, managing and presenting digital collections is another requirement. Thus experimentation and learning will always be a necessary part of the development of an open access scholarly resource or process

The five components to building capacity

Five components have been identified as part of creating the capacity for African publications to move online in a systematic and sustainable way.

The first component focuses on **systems and platforms** and to research needs and requirements for enabling staff responsible for publication management to move to electronic full-text publishing.

The second component focuses on **distribution and access points** as the basis for analysing the means of improving the efficacy of various distribution models for moving journal content into online contexts, and includes areas of sustainability, indexing and submission rates.

The third component focuses on **conducting an environmental scan** of current and potential technology networks for supporting open source software solutions for scholarly communication in higher education, by assessing the potential for journal hosting and support services which could operate on an institutional, national and regional basis.

The fourth component would **explore and assess various modes of delivery for ongoing assistance and training** for staff in online publishing techniques. This would draw on the available skills within African and international publishing training departments, research councils and development.

The fifth component focuses on **mapping the current and potential comprehensiveness and currency of indexing services** on a national, regional and global basis. This would be done by testing various means of improving journal indexing through automated transfer of metadata by indexes from journals and portals. Solutions would be sought for the following issues:

- The needs and requirements for enabling publishing staff to move to electronic full-text publishing;
- The means of improving the efficacy of various distribution models for moving journal content online;
- The current and potential technology networks required for supporting open source software solutions;
- How the online licensing, marketing and indexing strategies could most effectively ensure the accessibility and exposure of African research on a national, regional and global scale; and
- The most effective modes of delivery for ongoing assistance and training in online publishing techniques.